Zero for zero initiative in Doha round

650. SHRI RAHUL BAJAJ: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state the India's official position on the zero for zero sectoral initiatives in the Doha round?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): The Government opposes the Zero for Zero sectoral initiatives under Non Agricultural Market Access (NAMA) in the Doha round as these proposals are likely to create an inverted duty structure, distort the tiered tariff structural and adversely affect the sensitive domestic sectors.

Effect of bird flu on chicken export

651. SHRI P.R. RAJAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the cases of bird flu affected the export of chicken from India; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Setting up of new tea gardens

652. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that the tea plants of the tea gardens in the country are more than 70 years old;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that as a result of the old aged plants, the tea production in the country has been decreasing rapidly, if so, the year-wise details thereof for the last three years;

(d) the action taken/being taken for re-plantation of new plants to increase the production thereof; and

(e) the locations where new tea gardens are expected to be set up particularly in Uttar Pradesh?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) Yes, sir.

(b) It is estimated that 38% of the total tea area in the country has already crossed the threshold economic age limit of 50 years. Another 9% of the area is in the age bracket of 40-50 years.

(c) The productivity of the old aged bushes is low, but there has not been reduction in production at the national level as substantial area has been brought under new planting during the course of last 10 years and the production from the young plantations is offsetting the productivity loss due to the old aged tea bushes.

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Production of tea during the last three years is as under:

Year	Production of tea (in Million kgs)
2005	945.97
2006 (E)	959.90
2007 (E)	944.68

(E) Estimated and subject to revision.

(d) A Special Purpose Tea Fund has been set up for extending financial assistance by way of long term loan and subsidy for encouraging the tea gardens in taking up large scale uprooting and replanting/rejuvenation of the old age tea bushes. It is targeted to take up replanting and rejuvenation in an area of 2,12,000 hectares spread over for the period of next 15 years.

(e) There is no proposal to set up new gardens. At present there are no tea plantations in Uttar Pradesh.

Security concerns in Indian Ocean

†653. SHRI SHREEGOPAL VYAS: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether security concerns in Indian Ocean are aggravating;

(b) whether Naval officers have expressed their apprehension about L.T.T.E. also;

(c) whether experts have opined that this threat would further enhance after construction of Setusamudram canal; and

(d) the names of countries which are being contacted for modernization of Navy?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (d) Indian Ocean Region faces security threats on account of territorial disputes, trade and goods movements along sealanes, low intensity maritime threats, economic offences from the sea, etc. There are reports of certain terrorists being imparted training and likelihood of their infiltration through sea routes. However, India's coastal waters are well guarded by Indian Navy and Coast Guard and therefore threat perception of any nature can always be taken care of. In order to meet the modernization requirement of the Indian Navy, procurement/acquisition of items are made from various indigenous as well as foreign sources, including Russia, France, Germany, USA, UK, Israel, etc.

Resentment due to low wages

654. SHRI SITARAM YECHURY: Will the Minister of DEFFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is lot of resentment among the armed forces over the issue of lower wages; and

(b) if so, the steps Government has taken to ameliorate the distress?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) and (b) Pay, allowances and other benefits are granted to the Armed Forces Personnel as per Government orders issued from time to time. These are also examined by the Pay Commissions set up by the

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.